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### Precis: Age at Menarche, Depression and Antisocial Behavior in Adulthood

It has been proven in previous research that early maturing girls are vulnerable to mental health issues during adolescence, but little research has been done to examine the effects in adulthood. In their research, Mendle, Ryan, and Mckone aimed to determine the long-term mental health effects for early maturing girls.

Their research included a longitudinal study lasting 14 years where 7,802 women were interviewed and asked to self-report on a multitude of variables. Participants were asked to self-report their age at menarche, or their first period. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CED-S) was used to measure a woman's cognitive, affective, and physiological symptoms of depression. In order to determine a woman's antisocial behavior, they asked participants to self-report frequency of a variety of behaviors. Some of the questions included asking the participant if they had ever damaged property, stolen something worth more than 50 dollars, broke into a building, and how often the behaviors had occurred in the past month. The researchers also provided statistical controls for race, ethnicity, father absence, SES, and maternal education in order to avoid these variables from affecting their results.

They found that age of menarche significantly predicted depressive symptoms in a linear fashion. They also found a slight quadratic relationship suggesting that the predictions are more significant at a younger age of menarche. These results were still present at the age of 30, suggesting a longer lasting relationship than previously thought. The researchers concluded that early maturing girls are more prone to depressive symptoms in adulthood because they have

already become depressed during adolescence. They also found that age of menarche was significantly correlated with antisocial behavior in adolescence and adulthood.

Some limitations of the study include its sample population. While the researchers did control for race and ethnicity there is no mention of what country or culture these women are from. If the sample was taken from strictly American women, then these results cannot be generalized to other countries. Another limitation lies in the sampling methods and inaccuracies in self-reporting due to errors in memory, as well as the inclusion of missing data that was predicted using statistical models. Both measures could have skewed that data and affected the results of the study. An additional challenge to the study is that there are a multitude of possible reasons for an association between early maturing girls and depressive and antisocial symptoms. Therefore, it is difficult to control for all of the possible explanations for the phenomenon.

The findings of the study generate a public health concern due to the declining age of pubertal onset in our society and the evident long-term effects that it can have. Parents, pediatricians, and teachers should become familiar with the elevated risks of early maturing girls in order to be more sensitive to their needs and aid in their positive development. Much more research is needed to determine what society can do in order to provide the support needed by women to overcome these mental health challenges.

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References:

Mendle J, Ryan RM, McKone KMP. Age at Menarche, Depression, and Antisocial Behavior in Adulthood. *Pediatrics*. 2018;141(1):e20171703. Retrieved from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/141/1/e20171703.full.pdf>